



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
26 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-third session

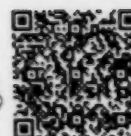
11–22 March 2019

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

Statement submitted by Global Fund for Widows, Guild of Service, National Alliance of Women’s Organizations, National Board of Catholic Women of England and Wales, Northern Ireland Women’s European Platform, Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland (SIGBI) Limited, and Widows Rights International, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

National Alliance of Women's Organisations' Statement

The priority theme of The Commission on the Status of Women provides a superb opportunity for those interested in equality to ask serious questions. In light of the recent and current economic crisis we should ask: What are the elements of our economic system that make it dysfunctional? How can we amend the system to ensure the most vulnerable are protected whilst yet encouraging effort and hard work? When we are considering social protection and access to services, should we not also be asking: Why are women so excluded from meaningful decision-making when evidently their participation benefits all? In what ways can we stop the growing inequality that threatens stability in every country? How can we ensure the rights of one group without denying those of another?

Women and men are equal. In principle they always have been. Yet throughout history this truth has not been the lived experience of peoples the world over. Traditional systems have favoured the participation of men over that of women. From politicians and leaders of thought to young people at school and in the street, the equality of women and men is acknowledged. Yet the progress and participation of women and girls is still obstructed in all walks of life.

Injustice continues to suppress the potential of women and girls. Whilst this exists humanity will remain enmeshed in confusion, conflict and imbalance moving from one crisis to another.

Qualities that govern the relationships between individuals, institutions, and other societal constituents shape how society functions. Thus our understanding of these relationships will dictate the practical measures we put in place in our attempt to better order our society,

Constant examples of positive qualities such as kindness, acts of service and courage, cooperation and empathy, are evidence that the idea that human beings can only act in selfish, violent and competitive ways is erroneous. At this Commission on the Status of Women 63rd Session therefore, is it not timely to ask how much these noble tendencies would develop if governments allocated substantial resources to cultivating the higher nature of their citizens, and focusing vigorous learning processes around how the latent ethical and moral powers of their inhabitants can be developed and released?

For a flourishing, peaceful and prosperous world, we need the participation of all people, whose skills and talents can be harnessed and harmonised for the needs of humanity. If millions of people are unable to realize their potential due to poverty, lack of education, lack of security and so on, humanity is missing out on their perspective, talents and skills. Social systems therefore have to be enhanced to enable the full participation and progress of all.

The diverse and undervalued qualities that women can bring to the workforce, and to every sphere of life, have left humanity suffering from their lack of influence. We can hardly imagine what could be achieved if women and men, girls and boys, were able to unleash the amazing potential latent in all of us and work collaboratively and creatively in creating the society envisaged by so many including organisations such as National Alliance of Women's Organisations.

National Alliance of Women's Organisations has worked to ensure the voice of young women (and men) is heard. The time of youth represents a period with especial possibilities. Young people can develop a sense of social responsibility and the possibility of being agents of positive change. This requires a concerted effort to

provide opportunities for them from early youth and to build individual capacity and vision. It is vital that young women (and men) are enabled to participate in United Nations processes so that they envision the world as one world and the possibility of effective global governance a reality. The Commission on the Status of Women 63rd Session provides an opportunity to question how young people can be enabled through social protection measures and through full implementation of Agenda 2030. Whilst it is vital to ensure the Agreed Conclusions contain language regarding young women and men, it is also important to ensure that the United Nations as an entity welcomes their participation in reality as well as in spirit.

If we are seeking a world where "strategies for the eradication of poverty to achieve sustainable development for all," are a reality, surely all of us must ask ourselves why so many people still lack basic material necessities. If we are asking what can be done in terms of public services, social protection and equality infrastructure to ensure the eradication of poverty, perhaps we need to suggest that the severe challenges are a symptom of a severely dysfunctional economic order. We can all provide examples of the ills of extremes of wealth and poverty, increasing inequality, and corruption. Are these not destabilising society and tearing apart communities? How then can we shape laws that do not perpetuate all types of inequality? If we are trying to create an empowering society for all do we not need to ask what is the nature of work? What is the purpose of wealth? Will not this lead us to consider then what types of safety net are required by those unable to access or undertake remunerated decent work?

The emerging issue of The Commission on the Status of Women 61st Session provided an opportunity to hear from indigenous women creating space for voices seldom heard to show innovative approaches from those who traditionally had not been seen as sources of answers. This points us to suggest that the United Nations system develop its ability to see capacity and strength in populations that have hitherto been seen as victims or marginalised.

Throughout the process of the Commission on the Status of Women 63rd Session is it possible for all stakeholders to affirm that populations with limited financial resources are not silent until rescued by some outside force? Can we not seek to change the discourse so that mention of all groups is not framed in terms such as needs and challenges? Low-income groups are often only considered and engaged as recipients of services and assistance. They may be asked about their views to some extent. Should they not, rather, be embraced as equal and capable collaborators in a collective endeavour?

If the purpose of social services is to ensure that all members of society are able to access all portals for self-development and security equitably, we need to consider addressing poverty and lack of opportunities in a lasting way. Do we not therefore have to consider building a new pattern of society? The solution cannot be merely an act of accounting and moving around financial resources. Do we not need to create a society where the adult qualities of justice, compassion, cooperation, empathy are reflected fully in process, programmes and structures?

Within countries each group needs to be seen as one with capacity and possibility rather than the notion that the urbanised are somehow more able than the rural. Likewise, globally, we cannot continue with the outmoded idea that high-income areas have more knowledge and expertise than the village on the plain or in the mountain or forest. The knowledge and expertise may be different but who is to make the judgement as to which kind is better? Do we not need to acknowledge that no one has yet achieved what is needed to create the world so many of us dream of? Neither the financially wealthy nor the rural poor. When devising solutions and strategies around social protection and public services do we not need to reject the

notion of dependence but rather seek how to develop relationships of mutual support and assistance and that these are evidence of a strong society not a sign of weakness.

With the world in such a time of crisis on every front, we ask that the Commission on the Status of Women 63rd Session be a space where States Parties, United Nations Agencies and civil society ask serious questions and discuss frankly and without rancour, how to restructure society to ensure justice and opportunity for all, based on the sure knowledge that we are all equal and have great capacities to contribute to the common weal and betterment of the world.



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peace for the twenty-first century”

**Statement submitted by Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, Institute of
Inter-Balkan Relations, Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary —
Loreto Generalate, Kosmos Associates, Inc, Loreto Community
(Sisters of Loreto) and Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries,
non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the
Economic and Social Council***

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resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

Global Citizenship, Social Protection, and the Equality of Women and Men

We are one humanity living in one shared world. As such we are all citizens of that world, citizens with a responsibility for the care of that shared planet and for the wellbeing of each other. As citizens of that world, we also have a responsibility to create systems, laws, and processes, and to take actions that ensure justice, security, peace, and equality for all.

The goal of equality for women and girls has made great strides in the past years. The Progress of the Worlds Women has shared with us that "as of 2014, 143 countries guarantee equality between women and men in their constitutions; 132 have equalized the minimum age of marriage...at 18 years or older, protecting girls from early marriage; at least 119 have passed legislation on domestic violence; and 125 have passed laws to make workplaces and public spaces safer for women by prohibiting sexual harassment" (UN-Women, 2016., p. 28). And yet as that same report of progress makes clear, we have a long way to go. Again from UN-Women, "Even in countries where gender-equal laws have been put in place, power inequalities between women and men as well as gender stereotypes and discriminatory social norms are deeply embedded" (p. 35).

Yet the introduction of new ideas into old systems can only take us so far. It will not serve to change the deeply embedded norms which lie at the heart of gender-based discrimination and violence. As UN-Women has stated, to "resist this rollback and make it clear that culture and religion cannot be a justification for the violation of rights, alliances between women's rights advocates and other like-minded forces, whether in government or in national and global civil society, are key."

The Coalition for Global Citizenship 2030 (CGC2030) is dedicated to policymaking from a starting point of the oneness of humanity. Beginning discussions at this level affirms our interconnectedness and promotes decision making on the basis of the common good. We call upon policymakers to use a simple test: if effectively implemented, would the policy under consideration be consistent with the reality of the oneness of humanity? Does it help promote justice (often by mitigating injustice)? Does it include all populations? And does it appropriately internalize costs and externalize benefits?

In a well-known analogy, humanity has been likened to a bird with two wings represented by male and female. The bird can only fly when the wings are equal in strength - but also when there is an equitable distribution of resources between the sexes. This will be needed in law and policy, as well as at the level of the community, the neighbourhood, and the family. But the complex dynamics of flight suggest further implications. For humanity to soar, its wings must be coordinated as well as strong. They must be able to act in concert, responding to one another with attention and sensitivity. They must be able to give way or take on burden when circumstances require it. And they must be directed toward the same goal. Otherwise progress will falter.

This is the link between social protection and infrastructure and the empowerment of women. When one half of humanity has been so adversely impacted by social structures and outmoded norms, all of us must come together to find ways to heal that damage. Policymakers must think not only about the fiscal and economic implications of decisions in this regard, but also the social dimensions. How is society remunerating women for the unpaid work they often bear the burden of? How are men increasingly arising to shoulder these responsibilities? What are the policy and

structural barriers before the bird of humanity, and how can they be removed so that our full capacity can be reached?

At the moment, the data is staggering. While known, it may be helpful to articulate a few concerns here: poverty affects women in greater numbers than men; 60 per cent of the world's hungry are women; women make up more than two-thirds of the world's illiterate; only 39 per cent of girls in rural communities will attend secondary school; women continue to earn lower wages for the same work as men; lack of access to clean water results in women spending 40 billion hours a year collecting water; environmental degradations and related climate disasters put women and girls at greater risk than men and boys; lack of sanitation makes women more vulnerable to sexual assault and disease (UN-Women); and in violent conflict women face not only the conventional weapons of war but also the weapon of sexual violence and human trafficking (United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA]). In conflict and consequential displacement, 75 per cent of those in need of humanitarian aid are women and the children in their care (UNFPA). These are the challenges humanity still faces, while women continue to be left out of or underrepresented in decision making and in politically influential leadership roles that are meant to bring about that equality.

If we are all citizens of a shared world, if each state, each civil society organization, each individual stands together committed to thinking, planning, acting from a commitment to equality for all, it is immediately clear that women and girls are an essential part of the solution. Gender equality programming, according to UN-Women, "contributes to improving access to and use of services, increasing the effectiveness of humanitarian outcomes and reducing gender inequalities." More than just the explicit policy itself, the process of policymaking must, therefore, be inclusive of those who it is intended to benefit. Indeed, the measures that are meant to improve the lives of women and girls should not only include them but be led by them.

When we ally, we see each other as equals. When we unite in the common ground of a shared goal or equality, our external differences do not create hierarchies but instead bring richness of ideas and perspectives to the process of finding solutions. Individual strengths are recognized and given space. Collective goals are strengthened by the diversity of voices calling for their fruition. Equality, therefore, is about honouring and giving value to the differences. Similarly, global citizenship, in its reconnection of the interconnectedness of humanity, requires the valuing and honouring of the diversity of contributions to our global society.

Therefore, we call on all States, civil society, and on the private sector to see their place as global citizens and their responsibility to all as such. We call on all these actors then to adopt the perspective that as one human family, we must unite in a spirit of collaborative determinization and commitment to finding inclusive and empowering solutions using a process for developing those solutions that is also inclusive and empowering. We call on all actors to recognize the interconnectedness of our shared humanity and planet. We call on all actors to place equality at the core of their efforts and from that to take true action in bring about a more equal world.

As global citizens who view humanity as one interconnected and yet diverse community, we see equality as a base, a core, and a necessary precondition to having a truly united world. The United Nations and its constituent Member States must share that commitment if it is to succeed for a world where all - women and girls, men and boys - are permitted to reach their full potential.



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Statement submitted by Associated Country Women of the World and Soroptimist International, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

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Statement

Social Protection for Women and Girls; Sustainability Through Education

It is vital that we redouble efforts to support the achievement of the 2030 Agenda through programmes to educate, enable and empower women and girls at grassroots level, by advocating on behalf of women and girls with multiple disadvantages, to ensure that legislation, policies and actions are in place ensuring that none of them are left behind. One of the most powerful elements of the Sustainable Development Goals is that they interconnect. Simply put, we cannot achieve one Goal without invoking assistance from the others. Sustainable Development Goals 4 (Quality Education) and Sustainable Development Goals 5 (Gender Equality) form a fundamental social protection platform from which all Sustainable Development Goals can assist women and girls around the world to move forward sustainably, progressing their status from the most vulnerable and poorest sectors of societies, to playing their rightful part in their communities.

Information from the World Inequality Database on Education in 2018 shows that gender gaps in attainment are generally found among the poorest families, especially in rural areas and among indigenous or ethnic minority groups. When combined these factors mean that girls facing these circumstances are least likely to access education even if it is available. There is an increasing urgency for barriers to be removed.

For every community the education of girls and young women leads to the increased economic productivity and income generation for her family and that community. By focusing on eliminating gender inequality in education, there will be gains in every other aspect of social, economic, cultural and political development, thus providing an underpinning social protection platform across all societies.

Investment in girls' education, especially if aimed at improving its quality and coverage, yields a social benefit that has resulted in lower mortality rates, fewer unwanted births, and efforts to combat poverty, HIV/AIDS, and malnutrition. Girls' school attendance contributes to a decline in violence and harmful practices toward women and girls as well as leading to increases in per capita growth.

Though there have been positive achievements, there are still numerous barriers facing girls or women who wish to pursue an education. Serious problems affecting the right to education persist in the discriminatory environment girls and women face on a daily basis. These barriers are often caused by poverty, harmful traditional norms and practices, poor infrastructure and violence. These barriers may surface on a daily basis from the moment a girl or woman wakes up to the time she goes to sleep.

Girls forced into early marriage often have diminished access to continuing education; girls who are expected to work on family farms or assist with collection of water may never go to school; if secondary education is available to girls then they may regularly be missing from the classroom because of lack of toilet facilities or taboos around menstruation. Millions of women and girls each year suffer from a lack of access to clean water, water-related diseases and lack of sanitation in communities and schools. The impact of climate change on water supply and collection is disproportionately affecting women and in particular those in rural areas.

Improvements to infrastructure such as transportation and school facilities are needed. In order to successfully pursue her education, a woman or girl must have access to safe and affordable transportation to travel to and from the educational venue. Once there, it must be an environment which provides everyone with access

to safe sanitation and hygiene facilities, taking into account the specific needs of young women and girls for menstrual hygiene management and of persons with disabilities, without compromising their safety and dignity.

A quality education accessible beyond primary stages can be regarded as one of the major pillars of social protection as this offers women and girls the opportunity to fulfil their potential, to engage in social entrepreneurship, or to find meaningful employment. The education of boys to understand not only the importance but the value of this equality is crucial. Preliminary results from the Global Survey of the Living Conditions of Rural Women undertaken by the International Forum on Rural Women indicate that 42.5 per cent of respondents in rural communities do not have access to secondary education (ages 11-16) in their immediate areas.

Training and skills, including access to modern technology are necessary for women and girls to achieve economic empowerment. Advances in information and communications technology, including telecommunications, computers and the Internet, have transformed the world, including in the field of education. There is a pressing need to address the major impediments that many countries face in accessing new technologies and bridging the digital divides, both between and within countries and between women and men. In addition to "harnessing" information and communications technologies for development, there is a recognised need to emphasize quality of access to bridge digital and knowledge divides, using a multidimensional approach that includes speed, stability, affordability, language, local content and accessibility for persons with disabilities. Programmes such as UNESCO's MIL CLICKS are critical for safe, informed and productive use of information technologies.

In 2018, a report by UN-Women confirmed that access to the Internet was increasing exponentially and being used to communicate and share information in school settings, in workplaces and at home. However, women were still not being reached at the same pace as men. According to a study by the UN-Women, in 2017, the proportion of women using the Internet globally was 5.9 percentage points lower than for men. Women and girls must not be victims of this digital divide if they are to be successful in pursuing an education or surviving globalization.

A healthy society requires access to knowledge and information in all forms of health education for women and girls research showing that this will lead to healthier families and communities. Dr Margaret Chan, Director-General of the World Health Organization, said in 2010 that education and health go hand in hand. The evidence demonstrating the links is overwhelming. We know, too, that the education of girls brings an especially high payback for health. In this sense, education and health are a sisterhood.

Education is a powerful way to break the cycle of poverty, ill health, misery, and low status passed on from one generation of women to the next. UNESCO supports this view stating, "A good quality education is the foundation of health and well-being. For people to lead healthy and productive lives, they need knowledge to prevent sickness and disease. For children and adolescents to learn, they need to be well nourished and healthy. Statistics from UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report show that the attainment of higher levels of education among mothers improves children's nutrition and vaccination rates, while reducing preventable child deaths, maternal mortality and HIV".

Failures in health systems, reactive policy making, and deeply rooted gender inequalities at family, community, and national levels have combined to create a devastating impact on women's health throughout her life cycle. Not only do women and girls face a specific set of health-related concerns, they also face sometimes insurmountable barriers to accessing services. Governments, communities, civil

society and individuals must work together to change attitudes and behaviours, inequalities, and system failures which negatively impact on the health of women and girls, with a focus on improving preventative and primary care.

Education enables women and girls to access information regarding reproductive and sexual rights and healthcare through all stages of their lives. The education of men and boys about the shared responsibility of child-bearing and other matters relating to sexuality and reproduction is also important. It is critical that men and boys are engaged in such educational programmes providing them with an understanding of the rights of women and girls over choices for their own bodies and their own lives. This in turn can provide protection from early marriage and Female genital mutilation and offer routes for release from domestic violence and other forms of abuse, both mental and physical.

Monitoring programs is important. It is critical that statistics are collected which are thorough and transparent, using gender sensitive statistics and indicators. Gender specific statistics are fundamental as a means to develop appropriate financing strategies, for the fulfilment of human rights and gender equality commitments and to monitor progress toward Sustainable Development Goals targets.

In order to take into account gender-specific disadvantages and needs, it is important to compile gender disaggregated data in many other areas, e.g. the distribution of property and assets between women and men, sensitive issues like gender-based violence. Gender-sensitive indicators will specify whether inequality between the sexes has increased or decreased over time, e.g. in the employment sector, indicators measure access to productive resources or wage ratios.

Such categories of data and indicators should be collected nationally, regionally and globally in order to measure gender gaps and consequently adjust development programmes to rectify inequalities and to ensure women's empowerment and provide social protection floors. At a minimum, data disaggregated on the basis of age, sex, geography, income, disability, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity and other factors relevant to monitor inequalities (including multiple inequalities experienced by women and girls) should be available to inform of the progress toward 2030.

Nationally appropriate Social Protection systems and measures including social protection floors have been recognized as playing an important part in addressing the poverty and vulnerability of women, children, older persons, indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities. Social protection floors have great potential in facilitating the enjoyment of the rights to education, social security, health, food, shelter, and water, in accordance with the obligations of States under international human rights law. When used as a floor and not a ceiling for protection, social protection floors can contribute significantly to gender equality and the realization of minimum essential levels of those rights especially for marginalized groups.

Social protection is seen as an investment in people and thus in long-term social and economic development. Nationally appropriate social protection systems and floors make a critical contribution to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals aimed at poverty eradication and exerting a positive impact on economic growth, social cohesion and social development. They have an essential role to play in building resilient and environmentally friendly societies, supporting removal of inequalities emphasised by gender.

For decades, Member States have been entering into agreements and adopting resolutions which provide for many forms of social protection for women and girls. However, for many women and girls personal and family safety, access to education, economic security, food security, safe shelter and a healthy life are a long way from being achieved. It is no longer acceptable that action has not been taken or is

implemented slowly. In order to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda, Governments must immediately act on the promises given so that no one is left behind.

We strongly urge Member States to implement all previously agreed resolutions which provide the social protection floors to enable women and girls to move out of poverty and vulnerability to leading well educated and dignified lives as contributing members of their communities.

This statement is endorsed by the following ECOSOC-accredited organisations:

Widows for Peace through Democracy

Women for Water Partnership

World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts

Zonta International



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**Statement submitted by Federatie van Nederlandse Verenigingen tot
Integratie Van Homoseksualiteit — COC Nederland, International
Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, International Lesbian
and Gay Association, International Service for Human Rights and
Swedish Federation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
Rights — RFSL, non-governmental organizations in consultative
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Statement

Social Protection Systems, Access to Public Services and Sustainable Infrastructure for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of all Women and Girls

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development commits to end poverty in all its forms and dimensions and states that all people must enjoy a basic standard of living including through social protection systems. The 2030 Agenda also calls on United Nations Member States and entities to implement nationally appropriate — in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — social protection systems and measures for all and to ensure that all people have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, and a good quality of life.

Further, the Agreed Conclusions of 61st Session of the Commission on the Status of Women urged governments and entities to work towards establishing or strengthening inclusive and gender-responsive social protection systems to ensure full access to social protection for all people without discrimination of any kind.

Barriers to accessing social protection systems, public services and sustainable infrastructure result when people face violence and discrimination based on their real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics. In particular lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women and gender non-conforming people continue to experience human rights violations on these grounds. These violations include killings, violent attacks, sexual violence, torture, arbitrary detention, forced marriage, denial of rights to assembly and expression and discrimination, including due to systemic structural barriers in accessing health care, education, employment and housing. Those defending the rights of lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women and gender non-conforming people continue to face reprisals and attacks for their work.

In order to ensure full compliance with Agenda 2030 and Agreed Conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women 61st Session on social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, the violence and discrimination faced by lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women and gender non-conforming people must be urgently addressed.

Elimination of All Forms of Violence and Discrimination

Lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women and gender non-conforming people in every region of the world are subjected to daily violence and discrimination based on their real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics, an experience often amplified by multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. This violence is directly linked to structural discrimination that reduces access to social protection systems, public services, and sustainable infrastructure. Access to these resources which include housing, education, employment, services, and health care are vital to the fulfilment of human rights and human potential and any impact on access halts the realization of these rights.

In particular, punitive and violent environments that marginalize people on the basis of their real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics create significant barriers to health resources for those individuals. In such contexts service providers that work with these individuals are also impacted and in many cases are forced to stop working due to retraction of funding, harassment or fear of persecution. Additionally, individuals may fear disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity or intersex status to medical

professionals out of fear of judgement, malpractice, harassment, exclusion or detention.

Lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and intersex women and gender non-conforming people in particular lack health insurance coverage, a secure income, access to culturally competent health and social service providers, and face cultural beliefs that decrease utilization of available services. As such they are less likely to seek routine medical care such as mammograms and pap smear tests. HIV and sexual health testing services are particularly important for this group given the high rates of targeted sexual violence towards lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women. One alarming manifestation of these barriers to healthcare access are the high rates of HIV infection in transgender women, which is up to 49 times higher than that of gay men in some contexts. Lack of access to preventative health services also places this group is at a higher risk for heart disease, cancer and depression.

Discrimination and violence on the basis of real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression act as a barrier to education. Young people who are gender non-conforming in particular are subjected to elevated rates of violence, harassment and bullying on the basis of their real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. These experiences often occur before the young person in question has had the opportunity to form their own identity in relation to their sexual orientation and gender identity. For example, in many countries young girls have reported being expelled from school or beaten by peers for appearing too masculine.

Lesbian, bisexual and transgender women have reported losing housing, employment or job opportunities due to their gender expression or for being open about their sexual orientation or gender identity. Evictions or refusal of accommodation to tenants based on their real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression are commonly reported as well.

In some settings, discrimination in education, housing, health, and employment can make this group further economically dependent on male relatives and coerces them to enter into heterosexual relationships. This results in an increased risk of physical abuse and sexual violence by partners or family members, further decreasing the access to public services, social protection systems, and sustainable infrastructure. Due to this compounding stigma, isolation, and the acute mental stress it causes, studies indicate that suicide or attempted suicide by this group is relatively common.

Human Rights at the United Nations

The human rights of lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women and gender non-conforming people is not a case for new international law or 'special rights'. The human rights of lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women and gender non-conforming people only requires the application of existing international law equally to everyone irrespective of their sexual orientation, gender identity, expression and/or sex characteristics.

Over the past 20 years, six United Nations treaty bodies including the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Committee Against Torture, and the Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Violence against Women, Committee on the Rights of the Child, and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities have addressed violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

The United Nations Human Rights Council appointed its first Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, as confirmed by the General Assembly in 2016. The Human

Rights Council has approved 3 resolutions on Violence and Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. Regional human rights systems have also supported human rights claims related to sexual orientation and gender identity.

Multiple reports from the Human Rights Council, United Nations Secretary General and Special Procedures Mandate holders across the United Nations system have highlighted violence and many other forms of direct and structural discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people; there have been multiple General Assembly resolutions on extrajudicial executions that note these concerns, as well as regional resolutions and conventions from the Organization of American States, the African Commission and the Council of Europe. It is worth noting that even the Holy See has stated its concern about violence against homosexual persons during the General Assembly in 2009.

Conclusion

The international human rights and sustainable development frameworks agree that the violence, discrimination, stigma, and the social and economic exclusion of lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women and gender non-conforming people must stop. The silence of the Agreed Conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women on these issues must end now.

The challenge of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development must take into account the marginalization process in which lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women and gender non-conforming people become vulnerable because of discriminations they face in almost all development areas..

We call on governments to commit to ending all violence and discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics gender expression and sex characteristics and to clearly reflect this commitment in the Agreed Conclusions.



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**Statement submitted by Canadian Federation of University
Women, Graduate Women International (GWI), International
Alliance of Women, National Council of Women of Canada and
YWCA of Canada, non-governmental organizations in consultative
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Statement

Promoting Gender Equality through Quality Public Education Systems and Services

Nelson Mandela once said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world". Education is essential in achieving gender equality. Education can ensure better health outcomes for women and girls, reduce child marriage, narrow the pay gap and empower women to take leadership positions.

Yet, only 44 per cent of member states have fully committed to gender equality in education according to the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report 2018. Member states have both the obligation to close gender inequalities in education and use education as a tool to foster a gender-equal world.

Increased efforts are needed to tackle the systemic barriers in accessing education for women and girls based on the intersection of gender, race, income and location as well as to ensure safe and non-discriminatory learning environments.

Addressing Systemic Barriers for Marginalized Women and Girls

Women and girls in developing countries are more likely to never go to school. In fact, 16 million girls worldwide will not attend school. Globally, harmful traditional practices, child marriage and gender stereotypes prevent women and girls from accessing education. Living in poverty and the lack of school services in close proximity to their homes can also deter women and girls from securing education at all levels. In the Global North, Indigenous women and girls also face systemic barriers to accessing education and a lack of school services in close proximity to their communities.

Early Childhood Education and Care

Only one in two children globally are enrolled in early childhood education and care. Unlike primary and secondary school, early childhood education and care is still predominantly seen as a private responsibility rather than a state responsibility. This is despite being highlighted as a human rights issue in human rights conventions and agreements such as the Convention on the right of the child. In Canada, early learning and child care services remain unavailable and inaccessible for many families due to high fees, limited licensed spaces and a market-based approach to service provision.

Publicly funded high quality, accessible and affordable early learning and child care can have a transformative impact on children, women and the economy. Early learning and child care is proven to guarantee better developmental outcomes namely by improving school readiness and social integration. Moreover, it can shift the weight of unpaid care work that is traditionally put on women and support gender equality by enabling women to pursue education and skills training as well as securing formal jobs, full time work, and building businesses. Financial institutions such as the IMF and the OECD have also highlighted its cost effectiveness and its high positive impact on economic growth.

Women and Girls Living in Poverty

Women and girls living in low-income families are more likely not to enter school or to drop out of school. This can be explained by the inability to afford fees related to schooling such as textbooks and transportation, and a gender bias favouring boys' education in some countries. Social expectations for girls to perform care and domestic tasks disproportionately affect girls and women in low-income families.

Securing access to education for girls cannot be isolated from ensuring access to other services such as drinking water and sanitation, health and reproductive health services, and safe and adequate housing.

Privatization

The High Commissioner for Human Rights highlights that an increased privatization of school has negative impacts on accessible and free quality education as it can generate disinvestment in public education. This has a direct impact for girls and women's education. Discriminatory admission requirements as well as the potential lack of compliance with the national curriculum in the private sector are also deterrents to girls' participation in school.

Women and Girls in Rural and Remote Settings

A majority of women and girls who cannot read come from rural and remote settings. Women represent two thirds of adults who are unable to read or write, a statistic that has not changed in 15 years. Technology can play a key role in providing education and skills training for individuals in rural and remote settings. A focus should also be given to improvement of infrastructure in rural areas with gender-sensitive facilities such as clean and safe sanitary facilities along with safe transportation and culturally sensitive education.

Literacy, Vocational and Skills Training

Vocational and skills training need to be relevant and to adapt to the changing labour market context. Most adults in middle and low-income countries still struggle with basic information and telecommunication technologies (ICT) according to the International Telecommunications Union. Women need to access ICT as well as digital literacy training in order to facilitate their integration into the labour market, to empower them and strengthen their social and financial independence and leadership potential through access to information.

Ensuring Safe and High-Quality Learning Environments: Ending Violence in Schools and on Campuses

Gender-based violence is prevalent in many schools and campuses around the world with an estimated 246 million children experiencing school-related violence every year. It has severe impact on women and girls' well-being, rights and ability to complete an education. Prevention of and response to sexual violence at all levels of education is crucial.

National standards and legislation accompanied by strong transparent monitoring mechanisms are needed to address sexual violence in schools and on campuses.

An inclusive and comprehensive health and sexuality education in primary and secondary school, where concepts such as consent and bystander intervention are taught, can contribute to preventing gender-based violence. Also key to tackling the issue is the training for teachers, staff and students on reporting mechanisms and on the root causes of gender-based violence.

High Quality Unbiased Education

Educational content should be free from gender bias and stereotypes, promote equal relationships and provide gender-responsive instruction. However, many textbooks still reinforce stereotypes, namely by representing women only in specific roles. A teacher's own gender bias can also contribute to gender inequality in the classroom. In its report on the Realization of the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl, the High Commissioner for Human Rights points to the State's responsibility to ensure that textbooks, curricula and programmes promote gender equality and dismantle harmful stereotypes. Training for teachers and staff in the use of evidence-based teaching and learning strategies to provide education that promotes gender equality and human rights is of significant importance.

We urge member states to:

- Commit to gender equality in education by adopting laws, policies and action plans, strong and transparent monitoring and accountability mechanisms as well as investment in capacity building to identify best practices.
- Ensure access at all levels to quality public education systems, and infrastructure that are gender-sensitive, including primary, secondary, and tertiary education, as well as publicly funded accessible, affordable, inclusive and quality early learning and child care.
- Provide funding to cover indirect costs of education for marginalized populations such as women and girls in poverty as well as strategies and services for such community development as safe drinking water, safe housing and health and reproductive health services.
- Improve access to ICT especially for girls living in rural and remote communities and invest in lifelong learning training that includes ICT skills and digital literacy.
- Ensure that textbooks, curricula, programmes and teaching methods promote gender equality and dismantle harmful stereotypes based on gender, race and religion.
- Provide training for teachers and staff on gender biases and evidence-based gender sensitive curricula that is culturally sensitive and promote human rights and gender equality as well as training on the root causes of gender-based violence and reporting processes.
- Increase and target development assistance investments to support gender equality in education.

In conclusion, education and gender equality are at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Efforts to ensure Sustainable Development Goal four inclusive and equitable quality education need to fully integrate the commitments to Sustainable Development Goal five to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

The Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) is a non-partisan, voluntary, self-funded organization with over 100 clubs, and close to 8400 members located in every province across Canada. Since its founding in 1919, Canadian Federation of University Women has been working to improve the status of women, and to promote human rights, public education, social justice, and peace.



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
26 November 2018
Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-third session

11–22 March 2019

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and
to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly
entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and
peace for the twenty-first century “

**Statement submitted by Anglican Consultative Council,
Association of Presbyterian Women of Aotearoa, New Zealand,
Church Women United, Commission of the Churches on
International Affairs of the World Council of Churches, Domestic
and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal
Church in the United States of America, Lutheran World
Federation, Presbyterian Church (USA), Salvation Army, The
United Church of Christ — Board for World Ministries, United
Methodist Women, Women’s Missionary Society of the African
Methodist Episcopal Church, and World Federation of Methodist
and Uniting Church Women, non-governmental organizations in
consultative status with the Economic and Social Council***

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being
circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council
resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

We, a coalition of Christian denominations and ecumenical organizations, welcome the opportunity to address the sixty-third session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women on social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

We continue to envision a human community where the dignity and sacred worth of every woman and girl is recognized and the participation of everyone is valued. We affirm God's world was designed and intended to be one of abundance for all creation, and all persons are born with inalienable rights which should be respected and honoured. It is our conviction that no person should be excluded based on race, ethnicity, gender, age, ability, religion or cultural practice. Diversity should be celebrated as a gift bestowed on all by our Creator.

We remind the Commission of the important role that faith-based organizations play in the advancement of women and girls. Gender justice is a vital and integral part of the mission of faith-based networks. Our coalition works to promote the economic and spiritual empowerment of women of all ages and girls, while we develop theological resources and advocacy tools to equip churches to address structural barriers to women's human rights.

Some key areas of concern:

Social Protection Systems

There are a multitude of ills that plague our societies. Poverty and hunger persist. Traditional aid programs are failing to address the root causes of poverty and hunger globally. Though we have seen progress and significant gains being accomplished through the efforts to meet Sustainable Development Goals 1 and 2, there is still much left to be done. The current socio-economic system is broken and pursues micro-level solutions to macro-level problems. If governments do not confront the social and economic disparities that exist, the wide gap between those who are extremely wealthy and in power, and those who are on the margins will only increase exponentially. Decent work protects and promotes human dignity and is central to any effort to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development at a global level. More women are unemployed or working in an informal economy with no social protection or security. Whether in the public or private sphere, from the highest levels of government decision-making to households, women continue to be denied equal opportunities with men to participate in decisions affecting their lives.

Existing institutional structures and cultural barriers are inherently gender-biased, requiring critical examination and radical transformation. These barriers — in government, corporate, social, academic, educational, civil, familial, and religious structures — prohibit equality between women and men and deny women's rights. Socio-economic inequities and systematic injustices must be acknowledged and directly addressed. Women must have full access to the formal and informal sectors, so they can participate in their own liberation and create their own thriving future, enjoying the basic rights and protections they inherently deserve.

Access to Public Services

Within the realm of social protection, access to public services is important. The faith community, alongside governments, continues to provide a broad spectrum of health services including maternal and child health services which contribute to the achievements we have seen locally and globally.

Systemic barriers, cultural-social beliefs and practices, discrimination, violence, and lack of funding prevent women and girls from benefitting from educational opportunities. Child, early and forced marriages and lack of safety result in girls dropping out of school at alarming rates. While resources have been put into primary education, women have limited access to secondary, technical and post-secondary education. This further diminishes the chance for full participation in economic, political and social decision-making and prevents opportunities to attain sustainable work.

There are paradigms of patriarchy, perpetuating violence and reinforcing ideas that women and girls should not or cannot be educated. Education, which optimizes the indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights, is key for redressing gender injustice and gender-based violence and overcoming discrimination against women and girls worldwide.

Deeply destructive paradigms also prevent women and girls from the opportunity to exercise their own agency, particularly, as it relates to their own sexual and reproductive health and rights. Many women and girls are hindered from accessing treatment due to poverty, geography, or weak health care systems. In addition, HIV-positive women, women with disabilities, migrant women, poor, ethnically and/or racially oppressed women face even greater discrimination when trying to obtain treatment and access to comprehensive health services.

It is critical to note that sexual violence in contexts of militarism and conflict involving state or non-state actors persists and destroys communities. The endemic culture of legal impunity for these crimes is a barrier to addressing this violence. Survivors are not offered sufficient care and protection.

From our faith perspective, access to safe health services is the inherent right of every woman and girl. A gender-sensitive response to the health care needs of women and girls must confront the changing social, cultural and economic factors that put them at risk. It also demands intentional investment and funding that reach women of all ages and girls. Gender equity awareness and engaging men and boys in this work are also imperative in changing societal and individual behaviours.

Sustainable Infrastructure

The contributions of women and girls to their communities, from farming to family care-giving; to architecture, technology and more, are invaluable. However, lack of access, isolation (particularly for women in rural communities), inadequate infrastructure and transportation (which can hinder the exchange of goods and services), environmental conditions and climate change hinder the creation and maintenance of sustainable communities. Drought, deforestation, rising sea levels causing salination of water supplies, and the prevalence of natural disasters, due to environmental degradation and climate change, all contribute greatly to food insecurity.

Therefore, the role of women in climate mitigation and adaptation efforts must be supported. Women's access to critical resources — including health care, especially sexual and reproductive health services, education, transportation, economic development, and access to markets for trade — as well as security and protection for victims of sexual violence must be prioritized to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

Recommendations for the United Nations and Member States

We firmly urge Member States to:

- Fully implement the Beijing Platform for Action, and additional vital international agreements such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, and the Sustainable Development Agenda
- Eliminate and prevent all forms of violence against women and girls as stipulated in the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women and Security Council Resolution 1325 as well as following resolutions related to it
- Consider faith communities as integral partners in the protection and promotion of women's human rights
- Increase access to education and training for women of all ages and girls
- Affirm women's rights to own land, to obtain loans, and to market goods
- Dismantle privatization schemes that undermine fundamental social services, including education, health care, transportation, and jobs
- Uphold the human rights of women including their right to full access to comprehensive sexual reproductive health education and services, free from discrimination and violence
- Promote equitable sharing of authority and responsibilities in all aspects of society, and equal access to economic and political power and decision-making bodies
- Create comprehensive legal protection for women and girls against discrimination, particularly regarding employment, housing, education and health care and for the victims of sexual violence, assault, harassment, abuse
- Ensure medical treatment for survivors as well as provide psycho-social services and support

We, the Christian community, are called by God and, we the peoples of the United Nations are implored by the Charter to "reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person. " As enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, all people are entitled to basic human rights. The implementation of policies and programs designed to benefit women of all ages and girls must be prioritized.



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
26 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-third session

11–22 March 2019

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

Statement submitted by ActionAid, Associated Country Women of the World, Christian Aid, Global Fund for Widows, Guild of Service, HelpAge International, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, Mother’s Union, National Alliance of Women’s Organizations, National Board of Catholic Women of England and Wales, National Council of Women in Great Britain, Northern Ireland Women’s European Platform, Practical Action, Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland (SIGBI) Limited, Tearfund, The Law Society, United Kingdom Association for the United Nations Development Fund for Women, Wales Assembly of Women, Widows Rights International, Widows for Peace through Democracy, Womankind Worldwide and World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

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Statement

The United Kingdom Commission on the Status of Women Alliance, brings together a wide range of organisations working for women and girls. This statement is a synthesis of concerns.

Social protection, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure are all critical and inextricably linked elements of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals requires effective implementation of all three elements. This relies on strong global commitment to empowering women and girls throughout their entire life course. It is essential that all the Sustainable Development Goals, with their gendered aspects, are implemented in a way that recognises the multiple roles women play and their diversity.

Political will, together with robust resources, are required to create mechanisms that effectively protect the rights of women and girls and promote women's empowerment throughout their entire lives. Despite contributing significantly to their families and economies, too many women are limited in their life options and opportunities, and strategic action is vital to create the conditions in which they can develop their full potential. Protecting and promoting women also contributes to the sustainable development of societies as a whole. Partnership with the business sector can contribute to raising awareness and support advocacy for gender equality.

The United Nations High Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment has recognised the need to extend social protection and invest in care infrastructure in order to 'guarantee both caregivers' and care receivers' rights, agency, autonomy and wellbeing. For these efforts to succeed, they must take the rights, preferences and needs of all women into account.

Social Protection

Women of all ages must be able to make choices about their own lives without having to rely on family for basic needs. In many countries, social protection is enshrined in law; however, issues around implementation and resourcing of policies affect women's effective enjoyment of social protection and reduces their opportunities to take up paid work, particularly women with disabilities.

Many vulnerable women, including women in the sex trade, face particular barriers in accessing social protection. It is essential that social protection and pension systems take account of the realities of women's lives. At present, older women across the globe are much less likely than older men to have full pension entitlements, which perpetuates, and widens, gender inequalities in older age. Provision for older women in low- and middle-income countries is particularly limited, and compounded by limitations of land ownership and inheritance rights. Detaching pension entitlements from labour markets ensures that accumulated inequalities are not transferred into the pension system. Social pensions can also address gender and age specific risks, such as a widow's loss of assets, or child care responsibilities, particularly in skipped generation households. Pensions can be an effective way of recognising the value of women's non-remunerated work.

Social protection systems are vital to ensure women can live their lives free from fear for their safety and clear on their rights as citizens. Gender based violence places significant limitations on women worldwide, in particular for groups with vulnerabilities including women with disabilities. Strong social and judicial systems are required to provide an environment where women not only feel safe to report abuse, but can challenge social norms and engage fully in society. Ratifying the

Istanbul Convention is a key action in this regard, while strengthening the role of national human rights institutions can contribute to effective monitoring of implementation.

Social protection of women must be a key priority across policy areas, with a focus on mainstreaming a gender transformative, life course perspective to policy making. This should include gender budgeting, strengthening gender competence within government and implementing human rights treaties. Focus should be on treating women equally with men in economic protection and welfare schemes, adequate pension provision for all women and tackling gender stereotypes perpetuating women's low paid and precarious work.

Safeguarding women and girls socially should focus on implementing legal protections against discrimination and harassment of all kinds, providing access to justice for violence survivors and challenging causes of gendered violence. Specific action is essential to support women in the sex trade, who face multiple barriers, and to protect core freedoms and rights of all women, including widows, migrants, refugees and victims of trafficking, and developing timely, transparent processes for ensuring nationality rights, safe asylum, residency and citizenship.

Access to Public Services

Access to public services is linked to social protection, as public services are intended to be universal and accessible to all. In particular women on lower incomes typically rely on them to meet their basic needs, while women, including older women, also shoulder a disproportionate amount of unpaid care work, particularly where care systems are not comprehensive. The reduced funding and provision of public services resulting from austerity and policy changes constitutes a specific threat to gender equality as well as women's wellbeing. Women in rural areas and women with disabilities are particularly disadvantaged due to compounding factors such as lack of transport and digital infrastructure.

While sufficient investment in public services remains essential, action across a number of policy areas can help ensure women and girls access core services. Investment in digital infrastructure is critical to improve access to digital services, and contribute to widening access to learning and knowledge, as emphasised in Sustainable Development Goal 4. This has particular potential for women in rural areas, as radio and mobile technology is now often available even in very low income and remote areas. Investment in education and training is, however, essential alongside roll out of digital services, to ensure that women of all ages and backgrounds can benefit equitably. There must be a specific focus on appropriate training for older women, women with low literacy, newcomer and refugee women, and women with disabilities.

We ask, however, that access to public services for women and girls is safeguarded and promoted by investment in critical services and health and social care, education and child care. Co-production and gender impact analysis in service development, linked with rural proofing, is essential to ensure adequate provision. Gender, marital-status and socio-economically disaggregated statistics are vital.

Infrastructure for Gender Equality

Infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is at the heart of Goal 4 and Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, and is essential to ensure continued, effective engagement of women, and visibility for gender equality in policy making. Effective infrastructure is often missing or has been reduced in scope in recent years. The effectiveness of mechanisms to engage women and promote gender equality also critically depend on the human rights frameworks

and governance systems within which they operate. In the United Kingdom, for example, legislation passed in 2016 restricts organisations receiving public funding in how they engage with policy and advocacy work, which has further exacerbated difficulties to keep the issues visible since a national mechanism for engaging women was abolished in 2010.

We ask that infrastructure is strengthened through mainstreaming a gender perspective in policy making, as outlined above. In addition, we ask that steps are taken to strengthen mechanisms for engaging women in policy making through enabling effective engagement of women of all ages and backgrounds. Critically, this must include resourcing for women's collective voices to be both heard and heeded by a mechanism independent of government, including funding for co-production and capacity building particularly among rarely heard groups, including women in the sex trade. Women must also have a strong presence in leading positions in all sectors including parliament. Ensuring a holistic approach to social protection programme design, which has gender-sensitive education and training at its core, is essential.

Conclusion

Urgent action across the range of this priority theme is required to protect and promote women's empowerment in the context of significant change and challenge to human rights and equality frameworks across the globe. We ask all stakeholders to use this opportunity to the full.



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
26 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-third session

11–22 March 2019

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and
to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly
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**Statement submitted by Associated Country Women of the World,
Institute of Cultural Affairs International, Solar Cookers
International, Soroptimist International, Women’s Union of
Russia, World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, and
World Association of Industrial and Technological Research
Organizations, non-governmental organizations in consultative
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Statement

Statement for Commission on the Status of Women 63 March 2019, from the Associated Country Women of the World and Soroptomist International

Priority Theme:

Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls;

The Sustainable Development Goals stand as waypoints along the road to accomplishing the 2030 Agenda, and first among them is 'No Poverty'. Member States, Civil Society and individuals have collectively agreed that these Goals must be achieved, but we must also recognise that these Goals are a starting point for genuine social change. Poverty is not a binary issue. Those currently in poverty may escape, may fall back, may barely survive on the edge. Others may prosper, only to suffer from economic, natural or health disaster. Social Protection Systems must be implemented, and Member States commit to ensuring their availability across the whole life course — targeting not just poverty — but addressing the risk of poverty and broader causes and impacts on women in every nation.

Whilst we have seen positive impacts made in the provision of pensions for those in older age groups, there remains a lot to be done in terms of access to social protections globally. Those in indigenous communities, ethnic minorities, migrants, those with disabilities, widows and young people are all less likely to secure decent, paid work and stability. These challenges are compounded if you are a woman, and more so when you live in a rural community.

Social protection systems must include an informed, gender-sensitive approach in their construction. Without this, the specific obstacles to women's involvement will always remain, and the system will fail to consider their needs and priorities. Women must be included in the decision-making processes that determine criteria for eligibility, or programmes will fall foul of inequality in household or family dynamics. Programmes must target individuals — and women in particular — rather than households if they are to overcome issues surrounding women's access to, and control of, resources.

The likelihood of women's access is further reduced when we take into account traditional assumptions about the role and responsibilities of women, particularly around childcare and mobility outside the home. Women with less education will be less connected to opportunities for social protections, and in particular those with complicated procedures for enrolling. Formal processes, such as birth registration, will support access to social protection programmes, but Member States must also address the complications of legal identification when considering migrants, refugees, stateless, homeless persons, those in rural communities who have fallen outside of formal registrations, and those without the education or literacy skills necessary to apply for support.

Social sensibility is important and must be combined with educational campaigns to remove the stigma surrounding the need for reliance on social protection programmes, as well as a wider approach to social change so that this reliance is genuinely transitory, and beneficiaries are able to progress to more stable, comfortable, and sustainable lives.

In rural communities' women are at the forefront of the labour market, where income and job insecurity are greater, work often revolves around seasonal terms, and climate change is having the greatest impact. They are over-represented in informal,

non-standard or temporary work, and continue to be the main providers of care work. This leaves reduced time for formal education, employment, and political activity. Even in countries with developed social protection programmes, the overall impact is a gender gap in contributory social protection coverage, including old-age pensions.

Whilst it is understood that reaching rural communities is more expensive, it must be remembered that accessing services becomes harder and more expensive for people in these areas, thus aggravating an already challenging situation. Funds must therefore be prioritised, and locally appropriate methods implemented. Some countries have made specific efforts to reach their citizens in rural communities, but much more must be done to support those most distanced from the reality of existing social protection programmes and ensure that they are consulted regarding the creation of new ones.

We welcome the commitment Member States have made to the Sustainable Development Goals, and that all participants in the Sixty-Third Session of the Commission on the Status of Women are committed to ensuring progress and agreed conclusions on social protections for women globally. We call on all those at the negotiating table to further ensure that women in rural communities are not forgotten, and that those voices hardest to hear resonate with us all in these two weeks.